

**REMARKS**

The Examiners' time and cooperation in their interview with Applicant's attorney on August 17, 2004 is, of course, appreciated.

Claim 1, the only independent claim in the instant application, has been carefully amended in order to more clearly and distinctly define Applicant's invention over the prior art references of record. In brief, claim 1 has been amended to more clearly define that the third party removes indicia contained within the body of the comments which may be used to identify the employee prior to transmitting the redacted comments on to the employer. Claim 1 has also been amended to more clearly define that the redacted comments contain the substance of the comments from the employee, but without any information, whatsoever, as to the identity of the employee.

The Patent Examiner, however, has previously rejected claim 1 as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,537,618 to Boulton et al. In view of Applicant's amendment to claim 1, however, Applicant respectfully submits that the Patent Examiner's rejection of claim 1 as unpatentable over Boulton can no longer stand.

More specifically, the Boulton patent admittedly teaches a feedback system in which a number of discrete data fields are transmitted over a telecommunication network. These fields may include information such as the employee name, department number, etc.

The Boulton reference also teaches that access to certain fields of the data record may be precluded for certain users. Consequently, it would be possible under the Boulton patent to deny access to the fields containing the employee's name to the employer. Consequently, under the Boulton system, the employee's name could be eliminated from the data record (or at least

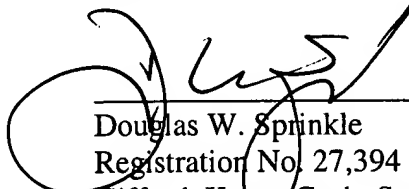
access to that portion of the data record denied to the employer) while the comments from the employee would be transmitted in their unredacted form to the employer.

Unlike the present invention, however, there is absolutely no suggestion or teaching in the Boulton reference of redacting the comments from the employee to delete information from which the employee could be identified while retaining the substance of the comments. This, of course, is critical to Applicant's invention and this aspect of Applicant's invention is now more clearly defined by claim 1, as amended.

For all the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1 patentably defines Applicant's invention over the prior art references of record and is, therefore, allowable. All remaining claims in this application depend from claim 1 and are, therefore, also allowable.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that this case is now in condition for formal allowance and such action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



Douglas W. Sprinkle  
Registration No. 27,394  
Gifford, Krass, Groh, Sprinkle,  
Anderson & Citkowski, P.C.  
280 N. Old Woodward Ave., Suite 400  
Birmingham, MI 48009-5394  
(248) 647-6000

Attorney for Applicant

DWS/gs  
GS-W:\Word Processing\dws\WVA12202-amd.doc